AMERICA'S #1 SUPER HERO !

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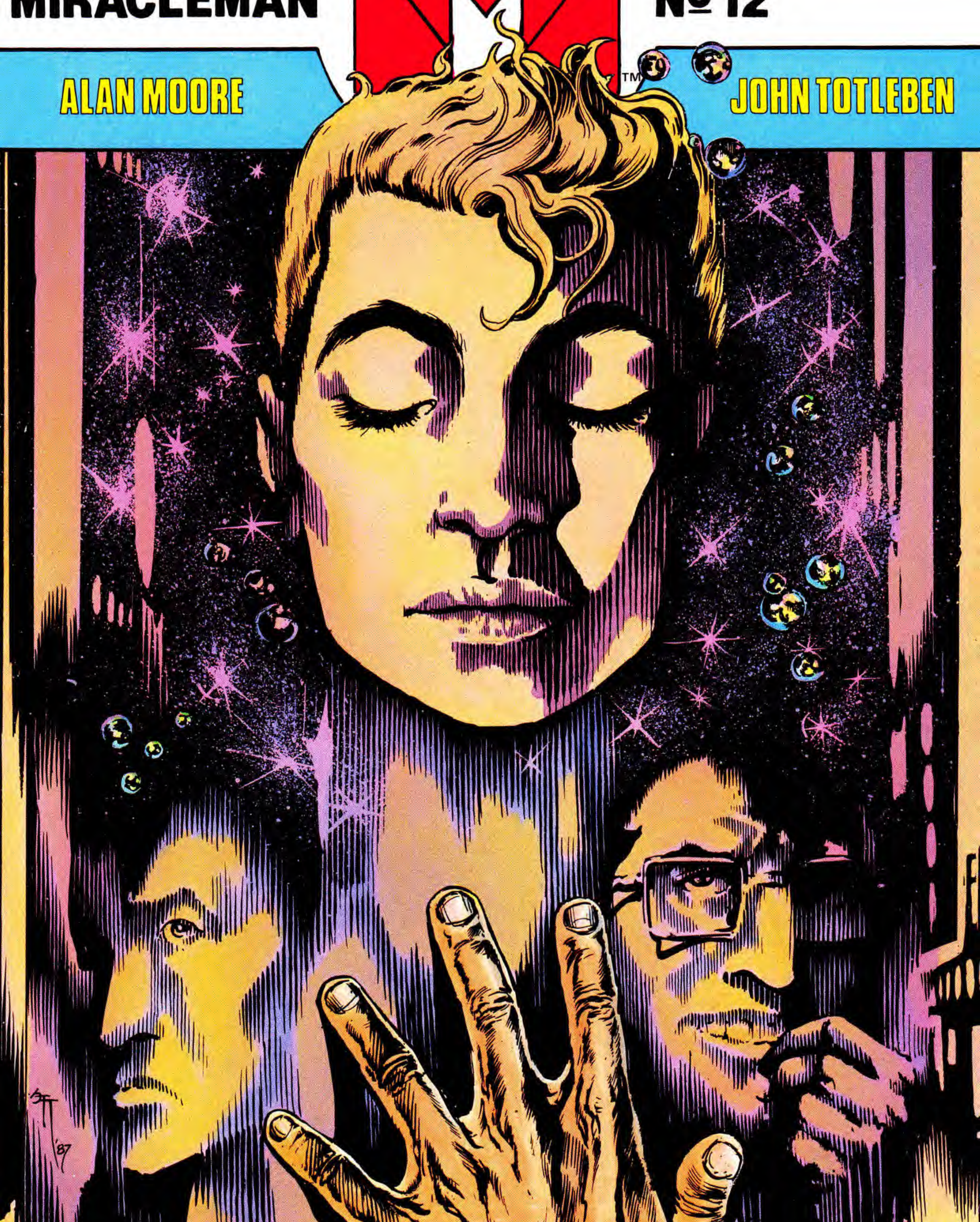
MIRACLEMAN

Nº 12

ALAN MOORE

JOHN TOTLEBEN



"1987:

"UUWWWWWWWWW: THE 747's BASS NOTE FALLS AWAY THROUGH THE DRIZZLE TOWARDS HEATHROW, A RED-HOT PRINTED CIRCUIT SIZZLING FAR BELOW.

"BY MOONLIGHT, LONDON'S A FLOODLIT ASYLUM. THE JET'S SHADOW SLIDES DOWN THE WESTERN FACE OF OLYMPUS LIKE THE CORPSE OF A BLACK PAPER BIRD, BORNE UPON A CHROME NIAGARA.

"THOUGH DIMINISHED BY JETS AND TELEPHONES, EACH DAY THE WORLD GROWS CONCEPTUALLY **LARGER**. AS A **FOCAL** POINT, THIS BIG WORLD DEMANDS A BIG **HOUSE**, WITH BIG **PEOPLE** TO FILL IT. WHEN **POLITICIANS** AND **MOVIE STARS** PROVE **INADEQUATE**, ONLY **GODS** REMAIN.

"1987: HEAVEN'S AN INFINITE DEPARTMENT STORE, A THOUSAND FLOORS OF PIPED-IN DEVOTIONAL MUSIC HAUNTING ITS CENTRE-WELL.

"WE SELL HUMANITY A LANGUAGE OF IDEAS TO ARTICULATE ITS TIMES; THE FAITH TO REMAIN UNAFRAID AS SOCIETY EXPLODES INTO INCREASINGLY CHIMERICAL SHAPES ABOUT THEM. WE DESCRIBE THE **NEW THING** THAT IS COMING, AND THEY **WORSHIP** US.

"RIDING AN INVISIBLE ELEVATOR, I DESCEND PAST ZOOS AND MUSEUMS. ALL HUMAN EXPERIENCE SPIRALS PAST ME, A WATERSPOUT OF BI-PLANES, ORCHIDS, BEAUTIFUL UNIFORMS...

"...IN THE HIGH SEVEN-HUNDREDS, CHANNELS HAVE BEEN CUT THROUGH THE PYRAMID, PERMITTING INTERIOR WEATHER.

. . .

"A GODDESS LIVES HERE, THUNDER-STORMS PRESSING THEIR BRUISE-PURPLE LIPS AGAINST THE GLASS WALLS OF HER CHAMBER, SUSPENDED AMIDST CLOUDS AND RAIN.

"ON LOWER STOREYS, WISE AND TACTFUL MECHANISMS COORDINATE THIS PLANET'S **PEACE**.

. . .

UP HERE, SHE COMPOSES ITS **LOVE**.

"THOUGH RARE AND IRIDESCENT PIGMENTS GLISTEN ON THE PALETTE OF MANKIND'S DESIRE, THEY OBSTINATELY CHOOSE TO SKETCH THEIR LOVE IN **CHARCOAL**, WHILE IN SECRET DREAMS THEY SMEAR THEIR FINGERS THROUGH FORBIDDEN VIOLETS, ORANGES AND BLUES.

"THEY MUST BE TAUGHT, THOUGH COLORBLIND WITH GUILT, TO FATHOM THE IMPENDING **BOREALIS**; TAUGHT A NEW **CHROMATIC SCALE** OF **PASSIONS** AND **DELIGHTS**.

'HALF A MILLION CALLS EACH SECOND SING THROUGH HER COMPUTER SWITCH-BOARD, FROM THE SHY, THE PLAIN, THE LONELY, SIFTED BY DISCREET AUTOMATA, PERSONAL DETAILS MATCHED, CONTACTS ARRANGED AND COMFORTS GIVEN, AN ELECTRIC **SHOULDER** OFFERED TO A HEARTSICK **WORLD**.

"IN THE SPERM BANKS, FROZEN SEED AWAITS BARREN RECIPIENTS SELECTED FROM ACROSS THE PLANET. TWO MORE GENERATIONS: THERE'LL BE THOUSANDS LIKE US.

"THOUSANDS.

'AS ZEUS LOVED MORTAL WOMEN IN THE FORM OF GOLDEN SPARKS, WE KNOW HUMANS IN A SHOWER OF PHOSPHOR-DOTS. AS OBJECTS OF MANKIND'S DESIRE, BOTH SPIRITUAL AND CARNAL, COUNTLESS SOLITARY CLIMAXES ARE REACHED EACH NIGHT, THEIR FEVERISH DEVOTIONS, EYES CLENCHED TIGHT, A CATECHISM, OF GASPS.

"AS ICONS THERE ARE SILKSCREENS, VIDEOS AND, BY SATELLITE, SHE OPERATES A WORLDWIDE **CABLE** SYSTEM, NETWORK-SCHEDULED **VISITATIONS**, TO THE **CHOSEN**, TO THE **FAITHFUL**, TO THE **HARD** AND TO THE **ACHING**...

"...GODDESS OF PULP LUST, COLD CHRYSLER GLAMOR, I ASCEND INTO HER SOUNDTRACK OF FORGOTTEN HIGH-SCHOOL POP AND DIGITALLY-SAMPLED TORCH-SONGS. I RISE UP TO EYES LIKE GLACIERS, LIPS LIKE **FATE**.

"I LEAVE SALIVA ON CHILL GLASS AND THINK OF WHEN I SAW HER FIRST, THIS STARK MADONNA OF THE QUANTUM AGE...

"...MY MUSE...

"...MY VENUS."

MIRACLEMAN

CHAPTER TWO: Aphrodite

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WAYNE TRUMAN
LETTERER

LETITIA GLOZER
EDITOR

"NOVEMBER, 1982:

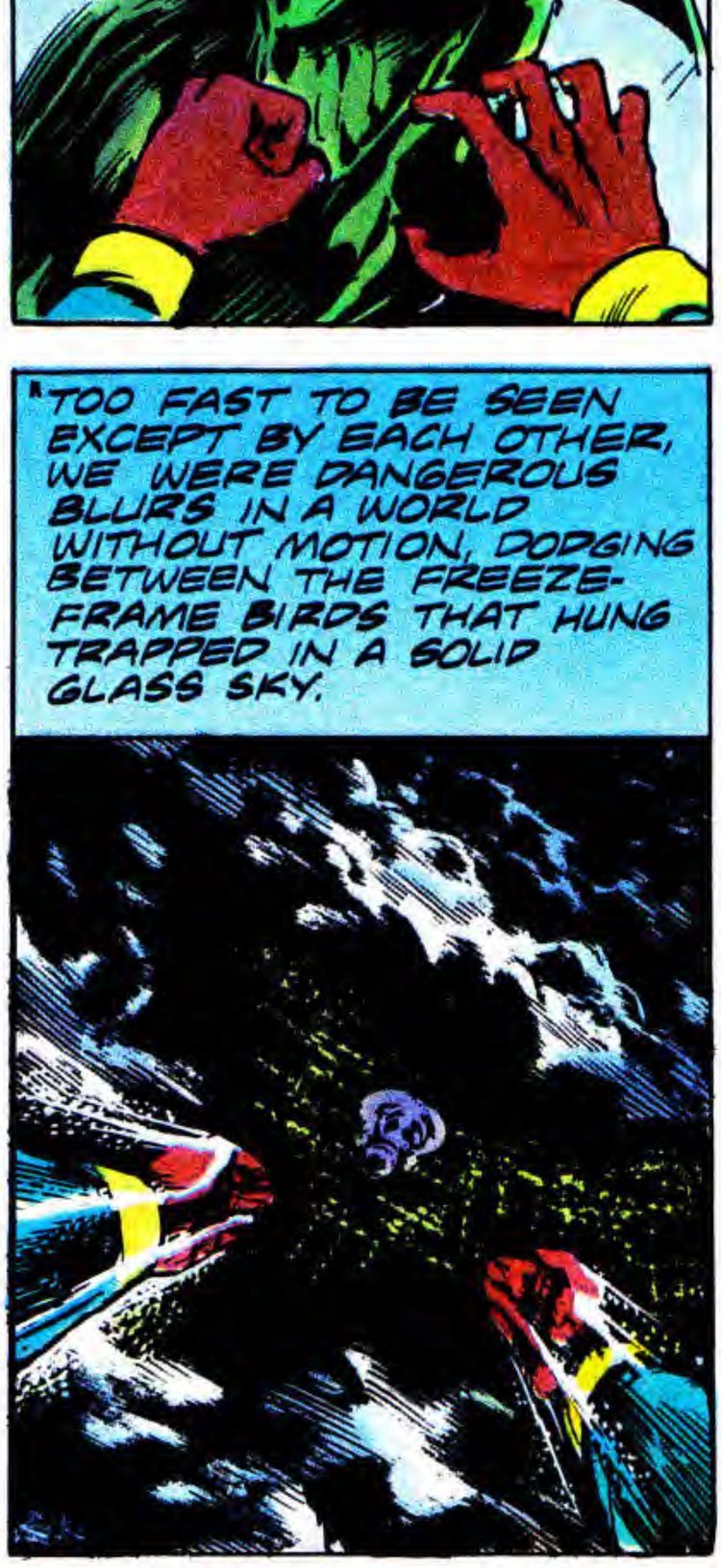
THE MILL OF PUNISHMENT THAT GROUND MY BODY PAUSED, AND TURNED WHAT I ASSUMED TO BE ITS HEAD AS IF IT HEARD A MURDER IN THE GLOOM, WHERE I HEARD ONLY RAIN UPON DEAD LEAVES.

"THERE CAME A WORD WITH SYLLABLES THAT RATTLED LIKE A NIGHT TRAIN STEAMING NEARER THROUGH THE BLACKNESS WITH ITS CYCLOPS LANTERN GLARING, 'TIL IT HIT AND ALL THE WORLD WAS BURNED AWAY IN ONE WHITE MOMENT.

"HAVING EXCHANGED A FORM THAT PULVERIZED FOR ONE THAT FLEW, IT LIFTED EERILY INTO THE RAIN, NO ANCHOR SAVE ITS SHADOW, DRAGGED ACROSS THE GRASS, DEFLATING AS IT WENT.

"GUESSING ITS PURPOSE, I GAVE CHASE.

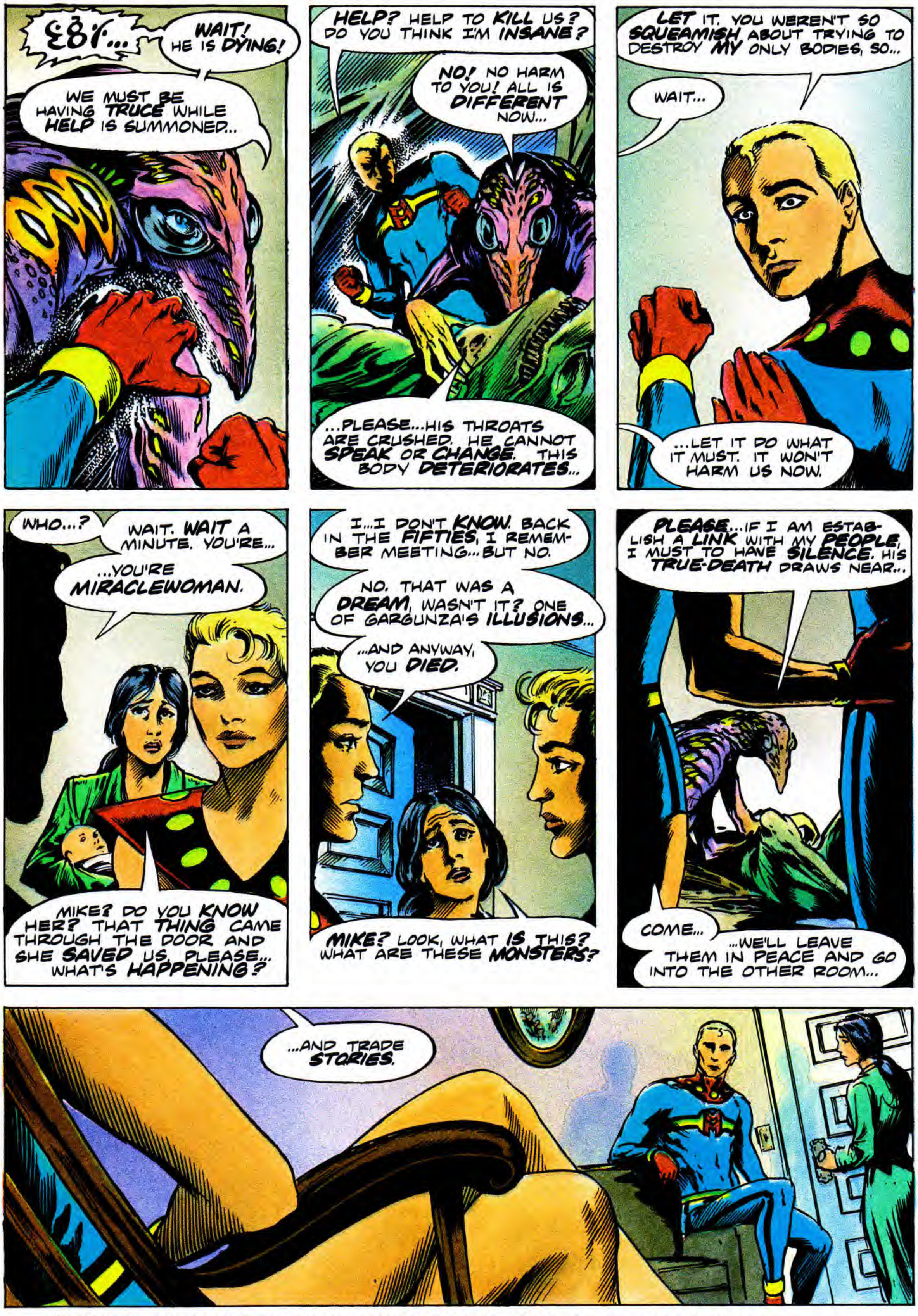
"TOO FAST TO BE SEEN EXCEPT BY EACH OTHER, WE WERE DANGEROUS BLURS IN A WORLD WITHOUT MOTION, DODGING BETWEEN THE FREEZE-FRAME BIRDS THAT HUNG TRAPPED IN A SOLID GLASS SKY.



"WE DROPPED AS ONE, A NANO-SECOND'S BREADTH BETWEEN US, WHILE BELOW, THE STREET WHERE I LIVED AS A MAN GREW LARGER, CLOSER, RAPIDLY EMBROIDERING ITSELF WITH DETAIL ON APPROACH.

"THROUGH THE SPLINTERED DOOR.

THE DISTANT CARS AND INCIDENTAL NOISE, ALTERED BY VELOCITY, BECAME A VIOLIN CRESCENDO, SHRIEKING, RISING, AS I HURTLED UP THE STAIRS, ONLY TO BE CONFRONTED BY BEREAVEMENT...


EH?...
WAIT! HE IS DYING!
WE MUST BE HAVING TRUCE WHILE HELP IS SUMMONED...
HELP? HELP TO KILL US? DO YOU THINK I'M INSANE?
NO! NO HARM TO YOU! ALL IS DIFFERENT NOW...
...PLEASE...HIS THROATS ARE CRUSHED. HE CANNOT SPEAK OR CHANGE. THIS BODY DETERIORATES...
LET IT. YOU WEREN'T SO SQUEAMISH ABOUT TRYING TO DESTROY MY ONLY BODIES, SO...
WAIT...
...LET IT DO WHAT IT MUST. IT WON'T HARM US NOW.
WHO...?
WAIT. WAIT A MINUTE. YOU'RE...
...YOU'RE MIRACLEWOMAN.
MIKE? DO YOU KNOW HER? THAT THING CAME THROUGH THE DOOR AND SHE SAVED US. PLEASE... WHAT'S HAPPENING?
I...I DON'T KNOW. BACK IN THE FIFTIES, I REMEMBER MEETING... BUT NO.
NO. THAT WAS A DREAM, WASN'T IT? ONE OF GARGUNZA'S ILLUSIONS...
...AND ANYWAY, YOU DIED.
MIKE? LOOK, WHAT IS THIS? WHAT ARE THESE MONSTERS?
PLEASE...IF I AM ESTABLISH A LINK WITH MY PEOPLE, I MUST TO HAVE SILENCE. HIS TRUE-DEATH DRAWS NEAR...
COME...
...WE'LL LEAVE THEM IN PEACE AND GO INTO THE OTHER ROOM...
...AND TRADE STORIES.

"NEARBY, SURROUNDED BY OUR REASSURING MESS OF DOMESTICITY, TWO DREAM-BEASTS LURKED, WHILE LIZ AND I SAT STUNNED AS ALL REALITY SEEPED FROM OUR LIVES, AND LISTENED TO THE ANGEL TELL HER TALE..."

I'M **AVRIL LEAR**, AND YES, WE'VE MET BEFORE. OUT OF THE SIXTIES, THAT AT **LEAST** WAS REAL.

FOR ME IT ALL BEGAN IN '55, YEAR OF THE WARSAW PACT. A WIND OF CHANGE BLEW WEST, HIKED MONROE'S SKIRT AROUND HER THIGHS...

...AND I BECAME A **GOD**.

"YOU'LL RECOGNIZE THE **DETAILS**: ORPHAN, GOING TO HER AUNT'S ALONG A TERRACED STREET; A CAR PULLS UP; SHE'S DRAGGED INSIDE AND CHLOROFORMED...

"...**ALL** NEWSPRINT COSTUMED HEROINES HAVE ORIGINS LIKE THAT, SCHOOLGIRL DETECTIVE YARNS COMMENCING WITH A FOREIGNER, A CAR...

"...THEN HE UNDID MY SHIRT, AND IT BECAME A **DIFFERENT** STORY.

"THERE WAS HALVAH ON HIS BREATH, EVEN ABOVE THE ETHER. BLOOD DRUMS POUNDED IN MY EARS LIKE ALL THE PISTONS OF THE WORLD OUTSIDE THE CAR WHERE COLORED STAINS OF LIGHT WOULD BLOOM AND FADE UPON THE WINDSCREEN, BLOOM AND FADE...

"WE REACHED A **BUNKER**. NOT THE ZARATHUSTRA PROJECT, WHICH I LEARNED OF **LATER**. **THESE** RESEARCHES WERE **UNKNOWN** EXCEPT TO THE OLD MAN AND HIS **ASSISTANT**. THE AIRFORCE REMAINED **UNAWARE**, THOUGH ITS DIVERTED **FUNDS** EQUIPPED GARGUNZA'S SECRET **LAB**.

"GARGUNZA. HE MADE ME.

"WE'RE ALMOST **SIBLINGS**, YOU AND I.

"HE **CLONED** ME, RAISED A PERFECT BODY IN HIS **VATS**, THEN SENT IT INTO **INFRASPACE** DRESSED IN A SUIT OF BRILLIANT BLUE, ALL RED STILETTO HEELS AND FIFTIES **LINES**...

GIVEN THE TASTES OF MY **COUTURIER**, UPON REFLECTION I COULD HAVE DONE WORSE.

"FOR REASONS WHOLLY UNCONNECTED WITH THE MILITARY USE THAT HIS SUPERIORS HAD INTENDED WHEN THEY FUNDED **YOU**, HE KEPT **THREE** OF US THERE...

"MYSELF, A HIDEOUS ALTERED **DOG**, AND TERRENCE **REDBECK**, WHO BECAME **YOUNG NASTYMAN**...

"THERE. I SEE YOU'RE STARTING TO **REMEMBER**.

"POOR TERRY. AIRFORCE **ORPHAN**, JUST LIKE **US**. THEY PUT AN **IMPLANT** IN HIS HEAD, GAVE HIM A SKINTIGHT SUIT OF BLACK, AND DROPPED HIM DOWN THEIR **WARP-WELL** INTO **INFRASPACE** TO JOIN THE **REST** OF DR. G.'S MENAGERIE...

"...EXCEPT THAT HE AND I WERE SPECIAL CASES. GRANTED, YOU AND YOUR TWO PARTNERS WERE **ABUSED**, BUT **YOU** WERE **KNOWN** ABOUT, AND THUS GARGUNZA DARED NOT GO TOO **FAR**.

"NOT SO WITH US.

"WITH **US**, HE COULD DO ANYTHING HE **LIKED**.

"HE FIRST BECAME A RAPIST AGED FOURTEEN. DID YOU KNOW THAT?

"WITH US, HE'D FIRST DISMISS HIS AIDE, THEN BY THE DREAMSCREEN'S LIGHT UNDRESS SAVE FOR HIS **SPECTACLES**.

"I WATCHED THE **VIDEOTAPES** HE'D MADE, YEARS LATER. NAKED, HE WAS **PITIFUL**; A TROLL MOUNTING A GODDESS WHILE SHE **SLEPT**.

"WATCHING MYSELF VIOLATED, I JUST **LAUGHED**. HE'D HAD NO PART OF **ME**.

"I WAS **ELSEWHERE**, A COSMOS FULL OF COLORS AND EMOTIONS THAT WERE SIMPLE, BRIGHT AND WONDERFULLY GARISH. FREE FROM HINDERING LOGIC, I EXPLORED A REALM OF INCANDESCENT COMIC-BOOK **IDEAS**.

"HE GAVE ME **FREEDOM**, IN A **PERFECT WORLD**, RECEIVING IN RETURN MY **CROTCH**. I LAUGHED AND LAUGHED.

"BUT THEN, OF COURSE, HE **MADE** OUR DREAMS, EVENTUALLY INTRUDING THERE AS WELL. THE FANTASIES HE FED TO ME WERE THINGS OF SCENTED GAGS AND ROPEBURNS. ALL HIS IMAGERY, AS EVER, HAD PULP ORIGINS.

"...FOR IF HE KNEW WHICH STRINGS OF LUST TO TUG THEN HE COULD **BREED** US, COULD BREED ME WITH REBBECK, DAUNTLESS, BATES OR YOU UNTIL HE HAD A **SUPER CHILD** TO DO WITH AS HE **PLEASED**.

TERRY I THINK HE TOOK A **LIKING** TO, ALLOWING HIM THE GREATER LICENSE THAT A VILLAIN'S ROLE PROVIDES, AND STEP BY STEP LEADING HIM ON TO PLATEAUS OF DEPRAVITY THAT PREVIOUSLY WERE GARGUNZA'S ALONE.

"TOWARDS THIS END I SUFFERED TORTURE CHAMBERS, MANACLES, A HOST OF DISCIPLINARY MACHINES, LURID MIRAGES HE ENDOWED WITH POST-WAR MEN'S MAG COVER-GLOSS.

"THAT **MIND**, SO **BRILLIANT**, SO **PERVERSE** AND INEXHAUSTIBLE IN ITS **INVENTION**, COINING NEW **SCENARIOS**, NEW PSYCHOSEXUAL **TRAUMAS**, CONSTANTLY ASPIRING TO A POINT SOMEWHERE BEYOND THE NEXT **EXTREME** WITH NO SIR DENNIS **ARCHER** CURBING HIS **EXCESS**.

"OF **COURSE** HE WENT TOO FAR. OF **COURSE**. WHERE **ELSE** COULD HE HAVE GONE?

"I'M POSITIVE IT WASN'T **ALL** FOR FUN. HE TABULATED EACH **RESPONSE**, HOPING TO CONTROL OUR **DESIRE**...

"HE WENT TOO FAR, WAS FAR TOO LATE IN REALISING TERRY'S **MIND** HAD GONE TOO FAR AS WELL.

"GARGUNZA'S LUSTS SHAPED OUR REALITY, WITH EPISODES **EMBELLISHED**, ENDLESSLY **REPEATED**, ALL INTERNAL LOGIC DASHED ASIDE, IMPATIENT FOR THE NEXT SCENE OF **HUMILIATION**, THUMBING THROUGH THE PAGES OF OUR LIVES...

"...UNTIL, DERANGED BY INCONSISTENCY, REBBECK AWOKE; BURST SCREAMING FROM THE LAB; WAS GONE.

"THE WAKING WORLD HE TREATED AS ANOTHER **DREAM**, A PSYCHOPATHIC LANDSCAPE WHERE ONE'S ACTIONS HAD NO **CONSEQUENCE**.

"FROM FOREIGN PORTS CAME WORD OF AN INSATIABLE BRIGAND WITH HIDEOUS **STRENGTHS** AND HIDEOUS **APPETITES**.

"AFRAID, GARGUNZA KNEW HIS SECRET SUPERMEN WOULD SHORTLY STAND **REVEALED**.

"WITHOUT AROUSING SUSPICION, GARGUNZA SUGGESTED THE MIRACLEMEN TRACK AN "IMAGINARY FOE" AND THEN **RETURN**, TESTING THEIR **OBEDIENCE**.

"HOPING YOU'D CAPTURE REBBECK **DISCREETLY** BUT FEARING **EXPOSURE**, GARGUNZA ACCELERATED HIS **BREEDING PROGRAMME**.

"HE'D WAKE **ME** TO **JOIN** YOUR HUNT, LETTING **SUPER-NATURE** TAKE ITS COURSE

"GARGUNZA NEXT CONVEYED MY **SLUMBERING** FORM DOWN TO A BEACH. ADMINISTERING A STIMULANT, HE WOKE ME TO CONTINUE WHERE MY DREAMS HAD CEASED.

"AWAKE, I HAD BUT ONE CONCERN; YOUNG NASTYMAN WAS FREE.

"DESIGNED TO SEGUE WITH REALITY, GARGUNZA MADE MY LAST MIRAGE HIS **FIERCEST**:

"WET, COLORFUL AND VIOLENT, FLYING FISH IN HEAT, **REBBECK** AND I FOUGHT WHILE COLD WAVES SLAPPED SALT IN RECENT WOUNDS. I DREAMED A HAIL OF LEATHER FISTS, THEN DREAMED **UNCONSCIOUSNESS**.

"THE MIRACLEMAN FAMILY MUST BE **WARNED**.

"HAIR-TRIGGER SENSES TRACED YOUR AURAS TO THE MOUNTAIN WHERE YOU GLORIOUS YOUNG SUPERMEN SLEPT, DUMPED THERE BY GARGUNZA, LEAF-VEIN WRINKLES IN BRIGHT UNIFORMS, DARKENED BY DEW...

"...STREWN IN DISARRAY, YET SOMEHOW CLASSICALLY ARRANGED: SPARTANS, EXHAUSTED, DRAINED BY WAR OR LOVE.

"ON WAKING, THOUGH **SURPRISED**, YOU WELCOMED HELP. AN UNEXPECTED FEMALE **COUNTERPART** SEEMED **NORMAL** IN THE CONTEXT OF YOUR **LIVES**.

"YOU ALL SHOWED OFF LIKE **SCHOOLBOYS**. BATES, DECRYING GIRLS, STOLE FRIGHTENED GLANCES AT MY LEGS. DAUNTLESS SULKED IN **SILENCE**, COSTUME RED AS A SLAPPED FACE.

"HE SUGGESTED **SEPARATING**, RESENTING MY **INTRUSION** ON YOUR **BOY'S CLUB**. UNAWARE OF HIS **MOTIVES**, YOU **PRAISED** THE IDEA, **BLIND** TO SIGNS THAT SEEMED SO **OBVIOUS** TO **ME**...

"...THOUGH **ANNOYED**, I **PITIED** HIM. HE **LOVED** YOU...

"...AND YOU DIDN'T KNOW.

"ALONE AGAIN, I FOLLOWED FADED **AURA-TRACES**, UNMISTAKABLY **REBBECKS**, TO A BUNKER ON **SALISBURY PLAIN**.

"INSIDE, IT WAS **SPACIOUS**, BUT **DESERTED**. EXPERIENCING CREEPING **DEJA VU**, GAZING AT THE **COUCHES** AND **SCREENS**, I GREW UNACCOUNTABLY **AFRAID**.

"WHAT HAD I **STUMBLED** UPON?

"THE VIDEO TAPES PROVIDED MY **ANSWER**. WATCHING, MY SHOCK, FURY, HORROR AND AMUSEMENT FINALLY CRYSTALLIZED INTO **EXHILARATION**.

"KNOWING THE **TRUTH**, I WAS **FREE**...A CARTOON FIGURE RIPPED FROM HER PAPER UNIVERSE AND GIVEN A **3-D** WORLD...

R.W F.F. PLAY REC.

"...BESOTTED BY MY **LIBERTY**, I SWORE I'D **KEEP** IT.

"SCANNING ACCELERATED VIDEOS, SKIMMING FILES, I SHOWERED IN PICTURES, WORDS, NEW NUMBERS, 'TIL MY SENSITIZED MIND STUNG, UNBEARABLY, EXQUISITELY...

"...GARGUNZA AND CRASHED ALIENS **ASIDE**, I LEARNED ABOUT MY **VALUE**, TOO GREAT FOR GARGUNZA TO RELINQUISH WHILE I **LIVED**...

"...THUS I MUST **DIE**.

"**RESUMED**, MY SEARCH LED TO A BLEAK, ICELANDIC BROTHEL, UNSTAFFED SAVE FOR **REBBECK'S** WOMAN, THREE DAYS DEAD. I DOUBT HE KNEW OR CARED.

"I EXPLAINED EVERYTHING, SUGGESTED FAKING DEATH, TRICKING GARGUNZA, BUT, DERANGED BY THE COLLISION OF GRIM PRESENT AND FICTITIOUS PAST, **REBBECK ATTACKED**.

"**HE WAS SO DISSIPATED** BY HIS CRUMBLING **REASON** AND DECAYING **WILL**, NOTHING IN HIS TORMENTED **EYES** EXCEPT A PLEA FOR **DEATH**.

"**ABOVE** VOLCANOES GARGLING MOLTEN ROCK, WE FOUGHT. I CAN'T RECALL WHO FIRST PROPELLED OUR FIGHT TOWARDS THEIR SMOULDERING, SPARK-INFESTED MOUTHS.

"**HE FLICKERED**, LIKE A FAULTY T.V. THEN, A FLASH, A **TEARING** SOUND...

"...AS THE VOLCANO BURST, I HALF-GLIMPSED SOMETHING WITH TOO MANY **FACES**, BORN UPON THE FIREFLOOD'S SIZZLING BREAST.

"IN COOLING-TOWER ACOUSTICS, CURSES RANG LIKE ANVILS. LUKEWARM, LAVA SPLASHED AGAINST MY FLANKS. I SWILLED SOME 'ROUND MY MOUTH, SPAT FIRE.

"**POOR TERRY**, POWERS FADING, FIRST **PERSPIRED**, THEN **BLISTERED**, EYEBROWS **SINGEING**. TEARS STEAMED BRIEFLY ON MY CHEEKS.

"LATER, RETRIEVING THOSE REMAINS, THE SPOOKSHOW MISTOOK THEM FOR YOUNG MIRACLEMAN'S.

"WHEN YOU'D REACHED ICELAND, RUMOR MENTIONED FIENDS, WARRING IN A VOLCANO, NEITHER SURVIVING.

"RECOVERING IN THE ARCTIC, YOU HEARD BULLETINS: A FAMILY NAMED MIRACLE SHOULD CROSS THE NORTH SEA HOME. THEIR DOCTOR HAD BAD NEWS.

"BELIEVING YOURSELVES WARNED ABOUT GARGUNZA'S LATEST PLOT, YOU INVESTIGATED...

"...UNAWARE OF WHAT TRANSPIRED. SUSPICIOUS, DENNIS ARCHER WAS CLOSE TO DISCOVERING HOW GARGUNZA DIVERTED FUNDS.

"SENSING IMPENDING DOOM, GARGUNZA MURDERED HIS ASSISTANT; FLED WITH NOTES AND DOG TO PARAGUAY. HIS FURIOUS EMPLOYERS NOW SAW THE MIRACLEMEN AS DANGEROUS LIABILITIES, NEEDING REMOVAL.

"THUS, HEADING HOME, YOU FOUND SOMETHING GARGUNZA DESIGNED YEARS BEFORE, CALMING SUPERIORS FRIGHTENED OF YOUR POWER, ALLOWING THEM A MEANS OF SANCTION...

"...DRAGONSLAYER: BASICALLY, AN ABOMB CLOAKED BY HOLOGRAMS. THIS WAS THE SKY FORTRESS YOU FOUND, INTENDED TO DESTROY YOU.

"RETURNING HOME I BECAME AVRIL LEAR, CHANGING MY NAME AS A PRECAUTION.

"TRAINING AS A DOCTOR, I EMBRACED THE QUIET LIFE, TRADING A WORLD OF NEON THRILLS FOR ONE OF ENDLESS WOMEN NEEDING ENDLESS PILLS TO DULL THEIR ENDLESS MARRIAGES...

"...AND YET, WHENEVER I COULD BE ALONE, I'D PULL THIS PERFECT BODY ON JUST LIKE A GLOVE OR PIECE OF FINE, EXPENSIVE HOSE, EXULTING IN ITS SINGING FLESH AND LUCID CRYSTAL THOUGHTS, TUNING IT SECRETLY INTO AN UNSURPASSED DEVICE OF JOY AND EXCELLENCE."

I LAID LOW DURING YOUR **RE-EMERGENCE**, YOUR CLASH WITH **BATES**. WHEN OUR FRIENDS NEXT DOOR **EXPOSED** ME, I FOLLOWED YOUR **AURA** AND MY INTUITIONS **HERE**.

PRESUMABLY, THEY'RE RELATED TO GARGUNZA'S '**VISITOR**', SENT TO KEEP HIGH **TECHNOLOGY** OUT OF LOW-LIFE **HANDS**.

I...I DON'T **KNOW**. I HAVEN'T THOUGHT THIS **THROUGH**...

TELL THEM TO **GO**, MIKE. JUST TELL EVERYBODY TO LEAVE US **ALONE!**

DON'T WORRY. THE FEELINGS I'M PICKING UP FROM NEXT DOOR SEEM **OPTIMISTIC**. OUR GUEST IS READY TO LEAVE...

...ANY TIME **NOW**.

PLEASE TO PREPARE FOR **JOURNEY**. HAVE CONVERSED WITH THE **HOME**, AND TRANSPORT SOON **ARRIVES**. WILL TAKE FALLEN BROTHER TO **MEDICRATS**, AND THIS MATTER TO **TRIBUNAL**, AS **PROPER**.

WELL, IF YOU'VE CONTACTED **FRIENDS** TO COME AND **COLLECT** YOU, I HOPE THEIR MODE OF **TRANSPORT** IS **DISCREET**.

NO. NOT "FRIENDS."

TO MY HUMILITY, THIS MATTER OF BIGGEST IMPORTANCE. REQUIRES **ENEMIES** MUST **ALSO** BEING CONSULTED. PREPARE **EYES**, PLEASE...

...THEY COME.

"WINGLESS OF HELM AND HEEL, YET NO LESS HEAVEN'S **MESSENGERS**, SHE WAS SMOKE GRAY; HER COLLEAGUE CHINESE WHITE. HE SEEMED **FAMILIAR**. SOMETHING ABOUT **SNOWFLAKES**; YOUNG MEN **FIGHTING**...

"...IN CUT GLASS LANGUAGE, FORMAL AND PRECISE, THE TWO DISPARATE SPECIES SEEMED TO REACH A **SETTLEMENT**..."

IS AGREED. ALTERED ONES SHALL ACCOMPANY US FOR SHORT WHILE. HYBRID MAY REMAIN HERE WITH MOTHER-ANIMAL.

HYBRID? WHAT'S IT **SAYING?** MIKE, YOU'RE NOT GOING **ANYWHERE**--

LIZ, IF WE'RE GOING TO **SORT** THIS MADNESS **OUT**, I DON'T THINK I'VE ANY **CHOICE**...

PLEASE...WARDSMITHS IMPATIENT AND BROTHER NEEDING SOONEST MEDICINE. COME NOW.

MIKE, **NO!** YOU **CAN'T** JUST **LEAVE** US AGAIN...

LIZ, HE SAID "A SHORT WHILE", AND THIS IS **IMPORTANT** STUFF, ABOUT **ME**, MY **ORIGINS**.

LIZ, I'M **SORRY**...

MIKE, DON'T YOU...

...DARE...

"ONE WHITE HAND MADE A NOH-PLAY GESTURE: I WAS **ALGEBRA**, SUBJECT TO COLD EQUATIONS, EFFORTLESSLY PROVEN TO BE SOMEWHERE **ELSE**.

"ACROSS A BRIDGE OF RADIANT **FORMULAE** WE CLIMBED TOWARDS THE **OVERWORLD**, LEAVING THIS REALM **BEHIND**, ITS PARADISES AND ITS **PAINS**, ITS **PLEASURES**...

"...AND ITS **PURGATORIES**."

CUH! LOOKOO IT **ENT**: ISS MARSTER **BATES!**

'KINELL. MASTER **BATES!** YOU A BIDDUVA **WANKER**, THEN, AY?

HE GRASSED US UP TO THAT NURSE WITHA TITS. SMAKKIZFAKKINEDDIN...

SANI-WIPES

tch. NOT **ANOTHER** BEATING? TRY NOT TO WET YOURSELF THIS TIME, EH?

LOOK AT THEM LAUGHING, RETARDED LITTLE MAGGOTS. THEY WOULDN'T LAUGH IF **I** GOT MY HANDS ON THEM.

YOU NEED ONLY SAY THE WORD...

WOULDN'T THE LOOK ON THEIR **FACES** BE **WORTH** IT? ALL **YOU** NEED DO IS--

NO! NO NO **NO!**

:nhuhuch:

I DON'T CARE IF THEY **BEAT** ME **UP**, OR **KILL** ME, OR **ANYTHING!** I **WON'T** LET YOU OUT!

I WON'T.

NOW WASH YOUR HANDS

EAT IT

TRASH

BASEIT EATS SHIT

KILL

"IN HIS DARK PLACE, THE ENEMY STRAINED AGAINST BONDS THAT SEEMED MORE FRAGILE THAN THE FINEST THREAD, YET WOULD NOT **BREAK**.

"THOUGH I MIGHT CLIMB TO HEAVEN'S **THRESHOLD**, HE'D NOT CEASE TO POUND UPON HELL'S **GATES**.

"IT'S 1987. WE ABOLISHED HELL TWO YEARS AGO.

"AIRWALKING, I PATROL A FUTURIST'S **VALHALLA** WHERE OLD SCIENTIFIC ROMANCES, REJUVENATED, LIVE AGAIN. MY HAIR IS FROSTED STELLAR-WHITE BY TRACKING BLACKLIGHT PENCIL BEAMS.

"BELOW, IN LONDON'S FOUNTAIN-SPRAY-SWEPT STREETS, UPON ITS LANTERN-BANGLED BRIDGES, BLACK GIRLS WEARING ICE-BLUE SAILOR-SUITS HOLD HANDS, WHISTLE AT BOYS WITH SILHOUETTES TATTOOED UPON THEIR ARMS, SHOWING THROUGH SHIRTS AS A CARTOGRAPHY OF ARTFULLY-PLACED BRUISES.

"THESE WILD, STORM-HAUNTED STRATA OF THE HEART ARE LOVE'S BEST STOREYS, LOVE'S MOST NECESSARY TIERS.

"IN HER COMPASSION SHE HAS SHOWN THE UGLY, BRILLIANT, DULL AND BEAUTIFUL ALIKE A LOVE THEY UNDERSTAND, MAKING THEM **WHOLE**.

"IN NOCTURNAL PARKS WHERE GLOBE-LAMPS HOURLY ALTER HUE, LOVERS KISS, DWINDLING THIS SPLENDID COSMOS TO A BEAD OF PURE AWARENESS, HELD BETWEEN CONVERGING TONGUES.

"ADRIFT IN THESE EROGENOUS ZONES, I HEAR GORGEOUS THUNDER SOUND IN DISTANT ROOMS AND FEEL THE ENERGY SHE'S FREED, A GRID OF QUICKENED PULSES THAT SPARKS BLUE ACROSS THE ARC-GAP BETWEEN FINGER-TIPS UPON A CAFE TABLE, FIRES THE HUMAN DYNAMO UNTIL ITS COILS BLAZE WHITE WITH POWER ENOUGH TO MAKE SONGS TRUE...

"...AND STOP THE NIGHT...

"...AND TURN THE WORLD."

TO BE CONTINUED.